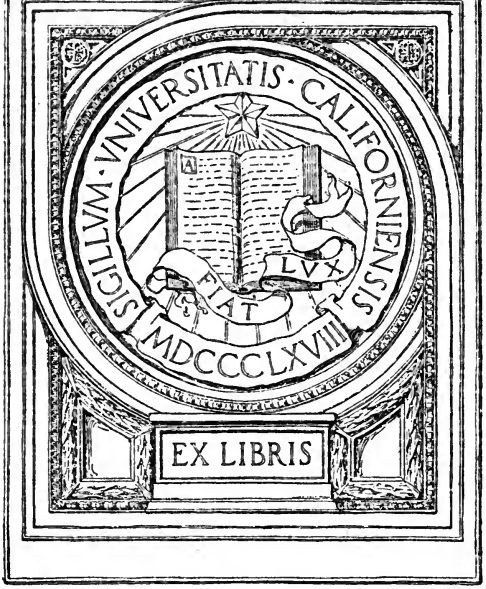
POEMS OF EARTH'S MEANING

RICHARD BURTON



POEMS OF
EARTH'S MEANING

OTHER VERSE
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

RAHAB, A POETIC DRAMA
Henry Holt and Company, New York

DUMB IN JUNE

MEMORIAL DAY AND OTHER POEMS

LYRICS OF BROTHERHOOD

MESSAGE AND MELODY
The Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., Boston

FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE
Little, Brown and Co., Boston

POEMS OF EARTH'S MEANING

BY

RICHARD BURTON

NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
1917

Published May, 1917

THE QUINN & BODEN CO. PRESS
RAHWAY, N. J.

To my friend
EDMUND D. BROOKS

Thanks are herewith tendered the editors of *The Atlantic, Harper's Magazine, The Century, Scribner's, The North American Review, The Bookman, The Outlook, The Independent, The Bellman,* and *Poetry,* for permission to reprint such pieces as originally appeared in their pages. Special obligations are due my friend, Edmund D. Brooks, who mostly kindly permits me to reprint "A Midsummer Memory."

SINGING FAITH

(*R. G. H.*)

DARKNESS and doubt and despair
  Vanish, at touch of the May!
Song? It inhabits the air;
  Love? It bewitches the way.

Ah, if we trust, comes the song,
  (Hark!) and the breath of it sweet;
Surer, for waiting so long,
  Fairer, for being so fleet.

If we have faith! And we must:
  Faith that shall wholly redeem,
Faith that shall hallow the dust,
  Faith, the fulfilment of Dream.

Darkness and doubt and despair
  Vanish, at touch of the May!
Song? It inhabits the air;
  Love? It bewitches the way.

CONTENTS

A MIDSUMMER MEMORY

An Elegy on the Death of Arthur Upson

Note

ARTHUR UPSON, whom the following poem commemorates, was drowned from his boat in Bemidji Lake, Minnesota, in the early evening of August 14, 1908, in the thirty-second year of his age. A lyric, just written, found in the empty boat, is the "swan song," referred to in stanza XLV of the elegy. He had that very day completed a poetic drama entitled "Gauvaine of The Retz," dealing with the Pornic legend of Gold Hair; but the manuscript disappeared with him and has never been found. During some ten years of literary activity, he published half a dozen volumes of verse and since his death his collected poems have appeared in two large volumes. Before his passing, recognition had come to him from distinguished critics and he was known to the few who treasure good poetry; the publishing of his collected works has already begun to secure the wider hearing his song deserves.

It was under the branches of an ancient yew tree in the garden of Wadham college, Oxford, that Upson conceived the "Octaves in an Oxford Garden," one of his best works. The yew was his favorite tree and was used as a design for his notepaper. There is an allusion to this in stanzas XXXVI-XXXVII. The poet's predilection for the water, also alluded to in the elegy, was well known to his intimate friends.

A MIDSUMMER MEMORY

I

I

Swift April ardors bring the white of May,
  May merges into leafy June, and all
Mid splendors of full summer gild the day
  And make the night an odorous festival
'Twixt star and sod; and yet, how wan the cheer,
I miss thee, Arthur, thou no more art here
To taste the beauty, laud the crescent year.

II

Strange is thine absence, since no son of man
  Felt deeplier in his blood the summer lure;
Nor sang more sweetly, while the caravan
  Of months passed stately by, nor was so sure
To list shy sounds, to smell the hidden flowers
And rediscover earth's reluctant bowers.

III

Yea, strange and sad. No thrush that flutes alone
  Amidst the thicket but reminds of thee,
As, silver sweet and shy, he makes his moan;
  No single bloom midst garden pageantry

But doth declare thee to my musing mind:
The presence gone, thy semblance left behind.

IV

In this thou livest and shalt ever live:
  Of all the beauty of the breathing days
Thou art inextricably a part, dost give
  An added loveliness, a new amaze;
Mine in the meadows, mine beside the leas,
Mine when I meet (since thou art part of these)
The splendor of the sunsets and the seas!

. . . . . .

V

Were spring and summer half so fair, if first
  They came into a world that knew them not?
Should we receive as now the thrilling burst
  Of bud and bird-song, if each vernal spot
Had never known the resurrection bliss?
Is not our love of summer made up of this
Welcoming the old friend that summer is?

VI

And so with thee,—the beauty and the joy
  Were never half to me so holy-deep
As since that thou art vanished, comrade, boy,
  Dear singer, singing yet, although asleep.
I see all through thine eyes, I feel thee by,
I know that Memory will not let thee die.

. . . . . .

VII

Hark! 'Tis the river-lay beyond the hill.
  How often when we flee the city-spell
And gleeful turn to Nature, thence to fill
  Our souls with peace and joyance, and to quell
The strife, we recognize old mother earth
As calling, calling to us in tender mirth;
How long-witholden secrets come to birth!

. . . . . .

VIII

Arthur, thy winsomeness of mood and mien,
  Now treasured up in hearts that still are strong,
Must gradually, as fade the leaves, I ween,
  Pass with those hearts the fleeting years along:
But O thy golden words! they still shall claim
Long life and honor and a singing fame!

IX

Thy golden words! Nay, silver were they too;
  Betimes, like sounding brass they summoned us;
Again, with dulcet pleading, pierced us through
  Whenso the hour was soft and amorous;
Or yet again, with pomp and purple pride
They seemed to open up down vistas wide
All ancient glories that have lived and died!

. . . . . .

X

What pride in chanting hath a forest bird?
  Doth any sunset with most spangled dress
Greeting the morn, e'er speak a haughty word?
  Is not all nature one in humbleness?
So wert thou humble, priest of beauty, dead
Untimely, leaving us discomforted.

. . . . . .

XI

There is companionship too close for speech:
  Wordless communion is the best, meseems;
Such is betwixt us, and our spirits reach
  To touch and mingle, waking or in dreams:
The union deepens, even as skies at eve
Grow mellow when the garish day-things leave.

XII

The green of marshes hath another hue
  From that of inland meadows, and the scent,
  Salt of the sea and pungent, interblent
With memories of sails upon the blue,
Comes from another world from that of hay
After June mowing; more unlike than they
Life seems, companion mine, with thee away.

. . . . . .

XIII

I hardly know if sorrow or content
  Have mastery as I brood upon thy loss:

Such comforting large thoughts are someway blent
  With haunting pain; the shadow of a cross
Is all uplit with radiance, and a voice
Weeping, becomes a voice that doth rejoice,
Although it wots not it hath made the choice.

. . . . . .

XIV

The bronze magnificence of autumn woke
  In thee an ecstasy that rivaled spring;
It seemed as if some pent-up rapture broke
  All bounds, when regal summer, on the wing,
Paused momently to hover, and became
A miracle of slumber and of flame.

XV

Then wert thou fain to weave on wonder looms
  Utterance of joy, stretching out eager hands
To May and eke October, apple blooms
  Fellowing with asters, in such cunning strands
Of woven fairness, that two-fold delight
Was in the pattern of such colors dight.

XVI

There came an eve whose colors, like dim strains
  Of old forgotten music, softly stole
Into the sundown skies; the subtle stains
  Of gray and pink and russet made a whole
Harmonious utterly; which faded slow
Into the mist-and-gold of night, and lo,
Even the stars were muffled in their glow!

XVII

Then felt I need of thee to share the sight:
  It was too delicate to win the praise
Of many easy-moved to quick delight
  In obvious skies that follow usual days;
But this, so marvelous in mood and tone,
This afterglow seemed meant for us alone.

XVIII

Alas, the summer waits thee! All her shows
  Heaped up and heavenly proffer thee their boon,
And yet in vain the great procession goes;
  Its chronicler no more beneath the moon,
Nor when the noon is high, walks as of yore:
Thy passing hath bereaved both sea and shore,
The very sea seems silent evermore!

II

XIX

The summer means renewal of old loves:
  Again I meet the friendly wayside things
  So tenderly recalled from other springs,
And in the mellow murmuring of ringed doves
I seem to hear remembered messages;
It is another youth with all of these.

XX

But how with thee? May we fond mortals take
  This blithe rejuvenescence for a sign
That likewise man, death's conqueror, shall break
  The shackles of long slumber, drain the wine
Of ruddy life again, resume the dear
Deep fellowships he knew when he was here?

XXI

All Nature rises: sap climbs up the bole,
  The flower-hand pricks the soil, the tiny leaf
Spreads sunward; shall this struggling wight, the soul,
  Alone be doomed never to burst the sheaf?
Gladly to grow, soaring elate to sing,
Such seems the fate of each created thing.

XXII

Two inconceivables: that we can win
  Our way from that dread land where silence reigns,
Where all our kind at length are gathered in,
  When blood no more leaps buoyant in our veins;
A place where there is neither glee nor grief,—
That we return from this, surpasses belief.

XXIII

But also it is dark to understand
  How my so dominant spirit can be quenched
Forever: I am lord of all the land
  Today, tomorrow from dominion wrenched.
How meaningless it looks, the bright, brief glory,
Sad with the shortness of all human story,
Sweet as the mocking-bird's rich repertory!

XXIV

Sometimes I step into the scented night
  And feel a breathing Presence; then my fears
Vanish, and in their stead comes calm delight;
  The home-call of the earth is in mine ears;
The universe throbs love, all life is one,
Swift through the velvet dark I find the sun.

XXV

But the mood passes, and the mystery
  That shuts us in, crushes the mounting soul;

Passes the hope as well of me-and-thee;
  The fond reunion and the final goal;
O Arthur, then both life and loving seem
The obliterated moment of a dream.

. . . . . .

XXVI

Despite the fear, the gnawing unbelief,
  Thy presence were no miracle, I know,
If suddenly I saw thee: then my grief
  Would be as it had never been, for O
'Tis easier far to feel thee close at hand,
Than banish one so bright to Shadow-land.

. . . . . .

XXVII

Once when the spring brought lilacs to a town
  Loved of us both, we planned how we should wend
Together to that place of high renown
  Where sage and dreamer dwelt, and tall trees bend
Above their sleep,—a precious spot. We said:
"Tomorrow"; and "tomorrow"; spring-tide sped,
We never went,—and, Arthur, thou art dead!

. . . . . .

XXVIII

The heavens were kindlier in the mythic age:
  The sun, a shining god, gave gifts to men;

The moon, fair women wight, was human then,
And stars were jewels on the poet's page.
One who had lost his friend might converse hold,
Leaning to listen up those courts of gold.

XXIX

But we are wiser now; the sky recedes
And all its friendly populace is fled.
Time, Space and *Substance* mock our deepest needs,
The heart goes hungry for the old faiths dead;
So must I seek for thee beyond the bars,
Higher than suns, behind the outmost stars.

XXX

But seek I will! and faithful in the quest
I swear to be so long as life may last.
Of all chill thoughts, this is the hatefulest:
That, slow but sure, the friendship-freighted past
Should fade, and I be satisfied to live
Unmindful, nor, as once, my homage give.

XXXI

If there be torture for the dear ones gone,
It must be in the thought that they are quite
Forgotten: not one soul to reckon on,
Of all who pledged them faith in death's despite.
Alas, Sad Heart, if thou return to see
Another in thy place and strange to thee!

XXXII

Hear me, dear Arthur, by whatever shore
  Thou pacest! As the year brings round the rose,
  As winter wanes and all the harshness goes
Out of the ground; as balmier airs restore
Midsummer's soft elysian miracle,
And earth resumes the witch-work of her spell,—

XXXIII

I shall renew the sweet old habitudes
  Were ours, forget thee never, cherish fond
Each look and tone and word, as one who broods
  On something sacred from a land beyond
These present troublings; hear the oath I swear:
Where I am thou shalt be, forever there!

XXXIV

Summer shall be the bond that binds us twain,
  Midsummer's purple pleasance be a tryst
Both of us haste to keep, and find again
  Solace and comradeship the happiest
That men e'er knew; midsummer's mounting tide
Of beauty still shall bear us side by side

XXXV

Unto the haven where all dreams come true:
  For in this bounty of the gracious year
  There is no room for grieving, every tear
Is dried, and every hurt attended to;
Together in the summer, thou and I,
Surely, such brothership can never die!

III

XXXVI

Lover of trees wert thou, but loved the best
  The ancient yew a-muse in gardens old;
Beneath her branches, as the sun rode west,
  Came many a dream too fair to quite unfold,
And many a note of sorrow and of glee;
Ineffable fondness seemed 'twixt her and thee.

XXXVII

Was it because, imprisoned in the bole,
  Creature of sylvan glades and twilight moods,
A slim, bright girl yearned toward thee in her soul
  And lured thee ever back to walk the woods?
If so, thou shouldst have slept, all dreamings past,
Tranquil beneath the shade her leafage cast,
Keeping a solemn tryst, loved to the last.

XXXVIII

But no, another Presence with a cry
  Deeper, more constant, drew thee to thy doom,
Haunted thy waking, nixy-like lurked nigh,
  Sang requiems of rest within the tomb;
Strong was the tree-call, strong through all thy days,
But still more potent were the waterways.

XXXIX

The waterways are wondrous; rivers, lakes,
  And bubbly well-runs in the inner wood,
Each has a voice that merry music makes
  Or mournful, by the spirit understood:
Ever the ocean with her organ tones
Sings round the capes, or up the long sand moans.

XL

All the world sang for thee; woodwind and brass
  Made tonal harmonies to haunt thine ear;
The thinnest song from out the summer grass,
  The tempest's choral-work, and, sphere by sphere,
The stars of God, chanting their rhythm clear,
All, all made music, all to thee were dear.
Woods, winds, and waters, how they drew thy soul,
Up, out, and ever toward its destined goal!

XLI

The water-call for thee was constant lure:
  No Undine in a fable heard more sweet
The cool, soft croon, nor better loved the pure
  Deep invitation where the mermaids meet.
So wert thou fain thine hours of ease to spend
Upon the bosom of this calling friend.

XLII

False friend and fateful day when thou didst glide
  Ghost-like, at twilight, in the tiny boat

Out through the shadows of the eventide
  Into the open waters, there to float
And dream; for as thou dream'st, some evil thing
Reached from the waves to seize thy life, and bring
Deep sadness unto all who dream and sing.

XLIII

The ebon trees against the saffron sky
  At sunset-time attended thee; the day
  Was fading, fading, tranquilly away
And soon the stars would shine serene and high;
Husht were the waves, the looming woods were ware,
Clad in the half light, rising mystic there,

XLIV

Of thee and of thy handiwork; Fate drew,
  Along with thee, under the shadowy piers
Thy last, lost story-song wherein anew
  Was told a legend out of elder years:
Sweet Gold Hair lived and loved beneath the sun;
Not ours but thine is she, till Time be done.

XLV

Fain of the summer thou, so it was meet
  That on her midmost day of song and shine
Thy life should cease; surely such end is sweet:
  What seemlier close could heart of man divine

Than while the twilight tints ensoul the sky,
Part of the rapture of the sun's good-bye,
Swan-like to sing and, singing, so to die?

. . . . . .

XLVI

I see two shapes that greet thee on the shore
  Whereof the sun shines through eternal time;
Twin lords of Beauty, beautiful to name,
  Who make life musical with lovely rime;
Above whatever once they knew of shame,
  Despite or agony, they walk and smile,
Princes together, such forevermore.

XLVII

Keats, who like thee died young, and Shelley too
  Whom the wide waters swallowed; surely both
  Do bid thee welcome, feeling nothing loth
To hail with comrade words and vision true
A fellow singer, one whose flute was tuned
To such a sweetness as to heal death's wound.

IV

XLVIII

Rises before me the sweet, eloquent face,
  The lithe form once again is at my side,
His speech is in mine ear, the moving grace
  Of his dear presence warms the morning tide
Or makes the evening lovely,—lo! he's there!
I reach my hand,—and meet the empty air.

XLIX

Nay, but that air shall stir to the rich strains
  He struck upon Life's harp; silence shall break
  Into such harmonies for Love's sole sake,
As when a flower after its birth-pains,
Bursts, white and odorous and full of scent,
Above the earth to bloom for man's content.

L

Bloom ever, in the world's song-garden wide,
  Dear one! I'll guard thee as a gardener
Would guard the growth he loves, nor let beside
  Their fairness aught unsightly lift or stir;
  Winds fraught with mignonette and Orient myrrh
Shall make thy dim walks fragrant, thy retreat
A place for lovers, thy meanderings sweet.

LI

And O so long as love is love, and glee
  Comes with the morning, and rich beauty broods
  In twilight skies; so long as interludes
Of music snatch the soul from misery;
So long as souls anhunger for delight;
Arthur, thy words shall be of thrilling might.

LII

The soul goes single that hath Beauty known;
  Lovers and troops of friends were thine, but they
Could not restrain thee from thy very own:
  The spirit-summons from the Faraway.
The early Arthur, him of Camelot,
Brooded not straitlier on his mystic lot.

LIII

Even as Arthur of the Table Round
  Followed the Gleam and fought the good fight
    through,
Then floated down the mere unto the sound
  Of flutes that like soft wind forever blew,
So thou didst straight embark and with a smile
Float on the bosom of the After-while.

LIV

The pure of heart are blesséd; they shall be
  God's chosen, he is close to them alone.

Lover of earth, now heaven hath claim on thee,
Boldly thine eyes face that refulgency
  Of more than mortal keenness; for thine own
Were pure indeed; forever safe thou art,
Because thine often-heavy human heart
Rests, circled by that promise: *They shall see!*

THE POET'S DESIRE

He craves not the boon of pleasure,
  Nor the glory of the earth,
He hears in the music's measure
  The measure of all worth.
    He follows a mystic Duty,
      Shy, with fathomless eyes:
    And yearns for the vision of Beauty
      And the Voice before he dies.

AN HOUR OF HOURS

Tomorrow, we take up our tasks
  That sweep us toward the hidden goal;
Tomorrow, we resume our masks;
  Tonight, we meet as soul to soul.

Mayhap the magic of the moon
  Has done it, or the breakers' sound,
Or else the mocker's madcap tune
  Or sweet scents stealing from the ground.

The loneliness has proved a snare
  To draw us close; this garden place,
Removed, and dim and passing fair,
  Has seized us with its subtle grace,

Made us forget, recall and dream;
  And so we sit as in a spell,
Muse on the glory and the gleam
  Of Life, and feel that all is well.

The words unspoken in the day
  Come softly to our lips; our hands
Are linked; as much as mortals may,
  Each looks on each and understands.

Yours is the glamour of the stars,
  And mine the wisdom of the years;
The tranquil night effaces scars,
  Its solace wipes away all tears.

Yet sorrow broods behind each breath
  To lend a sharper touch of bliss;
For joy the keenest fellows death
  And peril trembles in a kiss.

But O the moonlit world, the palms,
  The passion flowers, the smell of sea,
How they do proffer us their balms
  Of Beauty and of Mystery!

And this brief while, beneath a sky
  That throbs with meanings rich and strange,
Luring our hearts out, you and I,
  Lifting us high o'er chance and change,

Has welded us and made us one
  With the immortals; they who live
As if Fate were not, and the sun
  Had only golden gifts to give.

. . . . . .

The heavens go gray, the dawn is near,
  Upfolded are the trancéd flowers;
Remember, we were happy, Dear,
  For this sole, sacred hour of hours!

THE EARTH MOTHER

THE wise old Mother lets man play awhile—
  Even as a child with toys—about the earth,
Ere she shall welcome back, with sweet, slow smile,
  The foolish one to whom her throes gave birth.

Tug at his tether as he may, he knows,
  Deep in his heart, that she is always by;
He feels her presence underneath the snows,
  And in the rain of autumn hears her sigh.

The thrill of spring, and summer's tilth the same,
  Remind him of her breathing breast; the sea
Is her unrest; and where the maples flame,
  She goes decked forth in mood of pleasantry.

The more he strays, the longer battles grim
  With foes or friends, playing man's shifting rôle,
The surelier doth there slow uprise in him
  The yearning to come back and ease his soul;—

To take her hands and look into her face
  And kiss her forehead, while he hears her say:
"Welcome, my dear, to the old wonted place,
  Welcome to love, and sleep, and holiday."

HER EYES

Once, long ago, a little one of mine
  Would take my hand and look into my face
As if she magically might divine
  My tempted heart, my imminent disgrace.

And by that handclasp and that wistful look
  Would turn me safely in the better way;
Her faith so perfect that I could not brook
  The thought of aught to waken her dismay.

That little one is vanished; o'er her head
  Blow summer blooms, and on her stone you read
The simple story of the life she led,
  Joyous in semblance, pure in every deed.

And even yet, across the dim of years,
  How many, comes in the old pleading guise,
To keep me clean from all that soils and sears,
  The Christ-like candor of those early eyes.

THE NAME

WHAT tender love name can I call you by?
Not that of every hour and every one;
I would not take what others have begun
To soil by common use; nay, I would try
To lift our loving to some far-hung sky,
To bear it swift beyond each blazing sun
And in a demi-dark divinely spun
Of silver moons, to syllable it shy.

I yield to none; your mother's early way
Of calling you; your name in heaven writ clear,
These stand for holiness; but mine must be
Other, and more: its very sound must say:
"My dear, mine own, belovèd utterly,
My sweet, my sweet, and yet again, my dear"!

THE COMING OF THE WORDS

WISTFUL words, singing words, come to me at times,
And I seize them lovingly, weave them into rhymes;
The brave things, the fair things, that in the world I see
I marry to these winsome words in song and balladry.

Some words they stand for sorrow, and some for tenderness;
They touch the fount of tears, they fall as soft as a caress;
They ring out like a trumpet, or flute-like plain and plead,
They tell of noble happenings and glorify the deed.

Sweet words, they are the saviours of my dumb-stricken soul,
That give me moving power and vision of the goal;
They heal the helpless cripple and make the feeble strong
And break away the prison bars for one behind them long.

I cannot know the moment when their coming may
be set,
I can but dumbly wait and watch, lest haply I forget
The bliss that means their breathing, the cadence
of the air
They play upon the pipes of Life to make it smooth
and fair.

But O the joy of weaving, and O the beating heart
When come these high-born visitors from some dim
place apart
To bide with me a little, and lift me on a flame
Of love, and give my longing a presence and a
name!

DESOLATED GARDENS

THE trampling armies leave discomfited
How many a garden! Desolate and dead
The shining flowers whose soul breathed up to God
In winsome odors from the quiet sod.

Where the rose laughed, the dark ensanguined mire,
And where the birds in many a leafy choir
Greeted the sun, the cannon and the shell
Have changed an Eden to a shrieking hell.

No lilies left that erst rose tall and white,
Nor tulips proud a-blow, nor that fair sight,
The pansies of the many-winking eyes;
Ah, blight for bloom and rain for tranquil skies!

Of old, how often lovers kept a tryst
In such sweet haunts, how tenderly they kissed;
But love is now turned hate, the very grass
Is color-changed with blood of those who pass.

Lovers and birds alike have fled the place,
The writhen body and the upturned face
Know naught of love or song or carefree hours
That blessed the alleys of these blameless flowers.

O refuges so rifled and so dim
Of color, what to you the martial hymn!
How sweet ye were where now the battle raves,
O desolated gardens, with your graves!

HERE LIES PIERROT

THE moon's ashine; by many a lane
  Walk wistful lovers to and fro;
It must be like old days again;
  How they do love! *Here lies Pierrot.*

She loved me once, did Columbine.
  It sets my dusty heart aglow
Merely to lie and dream how fine
  Her semblance was,—*Here lies Pierrot!*

Her perfumed presence, silks and lace,
  Did madden men and wrought them woe;
For me alone her witching grace.
  Where is she now? *Here lies Pierrot.*

We two walked once beneath the moon—
  Yellow it hung, and large and low—
And listened to the tender tune
  Of nightingales,—*Here lies Pierrot!*

Our foolish vows of passion shook
  The very stars, they trembled so.
How it comes back, her soft, shy look,
  Now I am dead! *Here lies Pierrot!*

These other men and maids, who stroll
  Through moonlit poplar trees arow,
Does each play the enchanted rôle
  We phantoms played? *Here lies Pierrot!*

O joy, that I remember yet
  Sweet follies of the long ago!
Dear heaven, I would not quite forget!
  The moon's ashine; *Here lies Pierrot!*

PILLAR WORK

"And upon the top of the pillars was lily-work; so was the work of the Pillars finished."—I Kings, vii, 22.

AMONG the flowers, the lily blooms supreme
  For light and loveliness; her odorous breath
Floats like the memory of some delicate dream,
  After her body has gone down to death.
Of garden growths she is the fairest one;
She crowned the Temple built by Solomon.

Behold the task completed! Marble strength
  And ornament of precious stone were there,
But, for to make it lovelier, at length
  They wrought a work of lilies, passing fair,
And set it high atop, like a great gem
To glow and glitter in Jerusalem.

The strength that flowers in Beauty is twice strong.
  Four-square the Temple stood; but when the eye
Looked cloudward, lo, like to a lofty song,
  The lily-work made glad the Orient sky;
And all the worshipers grew hushed, and peace
Fell on their hearts, and heavenly release.

CLOWNS' DAY

(Choosing April First as an appropriate day, a number of professional clowns held a meeting in New York to perfect a permanent organization.)

BROTHER fools from everywhere,
  Let us gather and grow wise.
Ours the day, so let us dare
  Show the world our sober guise.

We must mum it through the year,
  Hide behind the painted grin;
Let us be more human here,
  Men of memories, men of sin.

Life's no jest, we know it well;
  Care lurks close behind the scene.
Heaven's not half so sure as hell
  For a clown whose purse is lean.

Ours to make the simple laugh,
  Ours to give the sad surcease;
This our only epitaph:
  "Here the jester is at peace."

God above! We merry men
  Smile and caper up and down,
Sing our foolish catches, when
  Death looks sweet to many a clown.

We are fain to weep and love,
  Pray, and think of mighty things;
Turn our dreamy gaze above,
  Mount to visions, float on wings.

Twenty raptures may go by
  Just outside the big white tent;
We would taste them ere we die,
  Since for this our life was lent.

We must pace the little ring;
  Yet Life has her golden goals
For us all, to that we cling;
  Clowns are we,—but living souls!

Lads in motley, brothers dear,
  Gather now and hark to me:
April Fools, our day, is here;
  Let us use it soberly.

LITTLE SISTER

I KNOW a girl of presence fresh and fair.
  She lies abed year-long, and so has lain
For half a lifetime; flower-sweet the air;
  The room is darkened to relieve her pain.

There is no hope held out of healing her,
  You could not blame her if she turned her face
Sullen unto the wall, and did demur
  From further breathing in her prison-place.

Not so: her sick-bed is a throne, wherefrom
  She doth most royally her favors grant;
Thither the needy and the wretched come,
  She is At Home to every visitant.

They call her *Little Sister:* for her heart
  Goes out to each that takes her by the hand,
In sisterly devotion; 'tis her part
  To feel, to succor, and to understand.

Unto her dim-lit chamber how they flock,
  The seamy folk, the weakling and the base!
There is no sin so low that she will mock,
  No shame that dare not look her in the face.

One never thinks of woe beside her bed,
  So blithe she bends beneath the rigorous rod;
She does not seem like one uncomforted,
  Her prayers like songs go bubbling up to God.

Hers is the inner secret of the soul;
  Radiant renouncement, love and fellow cheer,—
These things do crown her like an aureole,
  Making her saintly, while they make her dear.

SONG OF THE OPEN LAND

We of the open country,
  Men of the ranch and range,
Bronzed of skin and out to win,
  Men of the landscape strange,

Hail you, and bid you hither,
  Brothers so far away,
City-beguiled and greed-defiled,
  Into the air of day!

Here are the visions splendid,
  Girdled with space and light;
Ride where you will, there is beauty still,
  Breath, and the body's might.

The silver gray of the mesa,
  The alkali blotch below,
The water pool's sheen where the grass grows green,
  And the far peaks tipped with snow.

The great, gaunt scars of the chasms,
  Where the pines are writhen things,
Small of girth and stunted from birth,
  Where nothing flies or sings.

Yellow the sands, or dappled,
  Up where the foot-hills wind,
And the white stream leaps down the cañon deeps
  With the roar of beasts behind.

Myriad changes, myriad moods,
  Oh, the glad gamut of life!
Deserts abloom or bare as doom,
  Places for sleep or strife.

All of it splendid, all of it ours!
  Brother by brother stand!
Ho, for the West, where to breathe is best,
  Hail, from the open land!

THE HOME-RETURNING

'Tis we who live that vagrants are; the dead
  Are not poor outcasts from our love, but rather
The seeking souls who earlier have sped
  To where friends gather.

Just every little while, one slips away;
  Almost we hear their greeting from those others:
Our loss must make for them a happy day,
  Brothers to brothers!

We who remain draw closer each to each;
  We smile as best we may with each tomorrow;
But oh, our spirits know there is no speech
  To tell our sorrow!

Not theirs the grief, we say, not theirs the grief;
  Our ranks grow thin, while theirs increase
    forever:
No hearth a-cold, no falling of the leaf,
  No friends that sever.

Until we long to be of their good cheer;
  Oh, with what heartfelt, wistful yearning
To join that company select and dear,
  The home-returning!

ALLAN'S MOTHER

"O to be twenty-five again," she cried;
And he mistook her meaning, straight replied:
"Nay, you are fair yet, why upbraid the years
That leave you comely; not for you the fears
That are to beauty as the blight to flowers;
Behold you, now at best of all your powers,
Body and brain alike. You are as young
As youth, and Time sets music to your tongue,
Sweet wisdom on your brow doth aptly blend
With charm of eye and mouth,—believe me, friend."

Like one bemused and in a wistful dream,
She answered, looking toward the sunset gleam:

"How little can he know a mother's love,
Brooding deep thoughts man may not reckon of.
I would not, as I could not, set them back,
The years since then; Time's beckoning, backward track
I know is treacherous; but I am fain
For his, my baby's sake, to be again
In semblance what I was before he slept.

. . . . . .

When it was over, and I had not wept,
But dry-eyed faced the future, one thought crept

Into my mind to haunt me, and it still
Clings close and stings, and works its awful will:

"When I am come to heaven at last and seek
My little five-year-old, my darling meek
(So meek, so white, he went his lonely way!),
I sure shall find him, since perpetual day
Shines there, and all unchanged will be his face,
His pretty helplessness, his heedless grace,
Heaven on the instant home-like, when I see
My Allan all alone and wanting me—
O God, O God, what if he did not know
His mother, whom the years have altered so?
What if, as my two arms went round him there,
Crushed to my breast, and dazed, his unaware
Great eyes gave back no memory of earth,
And I the stranger and the child whose birth
Made me a living soul, were not made one?

"God knew what means a mother and her son;
He would, it seems, have whispered to my dear:
'Lo, it is she, herself, yea, she is here.'
And yet, and yet, forever in my mind
The picture stays, it lurks and looks behind
All worldly seemings,—till I needs must go
Back, back again into the Long Ago
When I was young and he, my very breath,
Owed everything to me—before his death.
How shall I meet him, when, with asking eyes,
My darling looks at me in Paradise?"

She shook with sobs; the man stood mute, distressed,
But laid a hand upon her shoulder, lest
She deem herself deserted in the breach;
Knowing a loving touch is more than speech.

TO A CRIPPLED COMRADE

MANY a year, O comrade mine,
  Have we labored side by side,
Broke the bread and poured the wine
  Of a friendship true and tried.

Now, all suddenly, you cease
  From your work, must turn from me:
Sit and wait for Death's release
  Silent, in your mystery.

Crippled friend, 'tis not alone
  You that wait the final call.
Time must every man disthrone,
  One by one the workers fall.

Cripples all, O comrade dear!
  Maimed of dreams we dreamt in youth,
Marred from many a combat drear,
  Blanched before the face of Truth.

Brother cripples! So to you
  Fellow fortune bids me say:
"Here's a friendship tried and true,
  Time can never take away."

TO EACH HIS DREAM

WITH each his little, secret dream
  We wander in and out the years:
The things that are, the things that seem,
  Are mingled with our smiles and tears.

For some the clue is from the skies,
  Others would find in mother earth
The end and the beginning: lies
  Are truth to some, and sorrow, mirth.

This one would win some dear-sought prize,
  And that attain his heart's delight
Through love; some live in sacrifice
  For the few hours 'twixt day and night.

Another looks beyond what Time
  May tell, his dream men do not see:
Upborne by visionings sublime
  His gaze is on eternity.

But one and all walk lone, are led
  By something deep within, the urge
Of action, and the finer bread
  That feeds a spirit on the verge

Of perishing,—for Life is not
  A scene without, but looks to where,
Far in the soul, a sacred spot
  Is kept for planning and for prayer.

Each hath his little, secret dream
  And—be it glory or disgrace—
Lo, just beyond, a starry gleam
  Throws back a wonder on each face!

THE FAR-OFF DAY

WHENEVER I behold a little bird
  Moving and singing close about my feet,
All unafraid—because I have not stirred—
  Of brutal blow or pitiless bullet fleet,
Eager to meet the mood which I profess,
By blithe acceptance of my friendliness,

I get a vision of the far-off day,
  Far-off and dim, descried by faith alone,
When all the tribes of Cain have passed away,
  And Love, somehow, has come into his own;
When kindness is the one felicity,
And bird and beast and man are one in Thee.

FELLOWSHIP

They told me his heart was a stone,
  His repentance but laughter,
As he sat in his durance alone,
  The awful day after.

I entered; no word did I speak,
  But stood there beside him,
Just brother by brother, too meek
  To sting or deride him.

And sudden the floodgates gave way,
  The strong will was broken;
We had fellowed as erring ones may,
  Though no word had been spoken;

And I knew I had brought him relief
  For the day and the morrow,
When the room became sacred with grief
  As he sobbed out his sorrow!

FIRST PRIZE

(Euripides' drama, "The Trojan Women," when it was first acted in 415 B.C., was, according to the historian Aelian, awarded but second prize. "The first prize was won by Xenocles, whoever he may have been," says Aelian.)

In Athens of old when the women wailed of war
To the magic of melody wrought of a mighty one,
The folk who listened grudged him the fitting meed,
Missed the meaning, blind to a higher deed
Than any deed of the sword beneath the sun;
Message of ruth sung in that place of yore.

Today, with the world shaken with turmoil and tears,
Peace but a homeless dream by a fireless shrine
And clash of armies louder than all the seas,
First prize goes to the wise Euripides
Bidding us heed, in deathless line upon line,
Sorrow and pity and love, across the years!

DREAM GARDEN

In sleep, I see a garden fit to frame
My dreamings: where no touch of the world's shame
Or sorrow or the death of joy can creep
Into the shelter of that happy keep.

This winsome garden is so seeming-true
It does not need, as other gardens do,
Tendance and toil; each day and every night
It blooms and breathes and lives for sheer delight

Of being, and the moss-green dials tell
Time only to declare that all is well.

When you have turned from her whose heart alone
Calls to your heart, to make it quite your own,
Leaving the pretense and the outer sin,
Come hither, to be shrived this place within.

You can be simple midst these walks of flowers:
No disillusion lurks along the hours
To make the moonlight less than morning glad;
You shall forget that man was ever sad;

Even the homeless winds come here to rest
And, cherished warm, to learn repose is best.

The walls that guard you and the growths that
    fend
Your soul from thought of Life's so bitter end,
Alike desire to close-encompass you
With scent and song, with wonder and with dew.

The hate that kills, the greed whose goal is death
Evanish, once they feel the balmy breath
Beneath the branches; by those virgins white,
The lilies, passions such are conquered quite.

If there be struggle in the far, dim ways,
Bees do not bruit it through the tranquil days.

All flower-things that speak of soft and fair
Flourish and give their fragrance to the air;
And chief, the sweet briar roses, small and dear
And petaled pale, they most inhabit here.

Dream garden, give me yet again to drink
Draughts from your fountains, let me by the brink
Of still, oblivious pools rest, and recall
My youth, and find old faith that life and all

It holds of good still shines, a miracle,
Nor once remember, lulled by this strong spell,

That just beyond the girdle of your gates,
Old agonies are coiled, and parting waits.
Let me, dream garden, look deep down the eyes
Of love, and so recapture Paradise!

SPRING FANTASIES

I

MAY DAY IN MARCH

MARCH with her madcap winds, March with her weather,
Hath vanished,—in her place
Hath come such day of grace
As May might bring: you wonder whether
'Tis all a dream,
A thing light like a feather,
Blown by a breath to nothingness again.

Birds blithely chirp, buds ope to tell their joy
And from earth's agèd mood there wells—
Hark, how it wells and swells!—
The clear song of a boy.
The robins' rhyme,
The green of willows by the turbulent brook,
The pink and white of orchard trees,
The odorous arbutus in her nook,
All, all of these
Do testify their gladness,—magic time!

A month before her coming-in, the earth,
The dear old foster mother, fain of life,

To beauty and to hope hath given birth,
  Twin children of her travail and her strife;
And man walks in a very trance of bliss,
        Remembering, remembering
        That only yesterday
        (It seems a world away!)
        No wight dared sing
        Nor any earthy thing
The tiniest touch of green and white display.
        But now, the vernal kiss,
And lo, the spring, the spring!

Divine foreteller of eternal summer,
        Hail and farewell!
Before thy time, thou art a comer
  Bearing a promise and a pledge:—
That when the frost returns and May shall seem
        The semblance of a dream,
Our faith may yet be firm; and on the edge
  Of rigorous winter we may know thee near,
        Thou mystic miracle!

Even as an inland wanderer may hear,
  Far from the sea voice, as he straining yearns
To catch the sound of billows,—faint but clear,—
        The multitudinous murmur of the brine,
        And doth divine
How ever round all lands the water-sphere,
Open and splendid, singing as she turns,
      Past plumèd capes of pine,

Beside bland meadows or by dreary sands,
Or skirting cliffs sun-soaked and keen ashine,—
Circles all shores and lifts her moving tides
Godward, where peace abides.

May day in March, the soul shall find thee still
A foretaste and a happy prophecy
Of that far-off, that wished-for day
When beauty conquers, winter fades away
Into the perfectness of halycon weather
And the world wonders whether
'Twas ever anything on earth but May!

II

THE SPRING RETURNS

The spring returns! Not as a strange newcomer,
But an old friend, who, just before the summer,
Comes with glad tidings, smiles a rosy smile;
Yet, in her words and ways, in all her bearing,
She seems like one from some far outland faring,
That may but linger here a little while.

Then in the orchards, blossoms pink or pearly,
Apple or cherry trees are blooming early;
You glimpse the fresh-sprung grass the leaves between.
The birds begin their tentative, sweet speeches,
And all along the winding river reaches
The willows show a soft, ineffable green.

But yesterday, the woods were drear, tomorrow
They will have all forgot their winter sorrow,
  The sap will run, the rigor pass away;
And in the open, all earth's simple creatures
Take heart of hope and don their sun-bright features,
  While hill and hollow echo with their play.

And when spring flits, and fuller flush of splendor
Usurps the delicate hues and blushes tender,
  Because proud summer mounts her throne again:
Then in the moments twilight-touched and tristful,
Memory will brood these dawns and evenings wistful,
  The sad, sweet mood of a young soul in pain:

Sweet for its beauty, sad, because it never
May rest, but gypsy-like fleets on forever.

III

THE SYMBOL

What is the symbol underneath it all,
  The secret message of the throb of things:
  The flower tossings and the whirl of wings,
The glow and scent when June makes carnival?
  'Tis like a sweet lost word of some old speech
  Man has forgotten yet can almost reach.

Listen! The sap doth murmur it, the rain
  Chants it in sibilant monotone, the breeze
  Lifting a voice among the fluttered trees,
Takes up the song, repeats it once again;
  And all the movement in the summer grass
  Seems pulsing to express it ere it pass.

Ever and alway, iterant and low,
  The whisper and the hint, the half-untold
  Suggestion that is as the ages old,
Yet fresh-faced now as in the long ago:
  "Seek, ye shall find, for you and I are one,
  Bound each to other since the years begun.

"You hear the call of kinship in my voice,
  My very breathing makes me part of you;
  The gifts I offer are a residue
Of your inheritance and natural choice;
  Man is not man who hath not eye to see
  My luminous gloss on Nature's mystery.

"Rich-languaged, fraught with memories and dreams,
  I lure you back in sacred moments when
  You learn, oblivious to the lore of men,
The lesson of the forests, fields and streams;
  Deep at my heart, deeper than all my mirth,
  The long-witholden meaning of the earth."

In syllables of beauty, yea, with words
  That move like music through the summer ways,
  Nature doth speak, and in her every phrase,—
The choiring rivers and the lyric birds,—
  She draws us from false gods, and our release
  Is certified by joy and love and peace.

IV

HORN AND VIOLIN

In the autumn, in the weather
  Golden, bronzed, and rich with sighs,
When we paced the lanes together,
  Dreamings deep were in your eyes,

Then, O Love, 'twas like the sounding
  Of a mellow horn that blows
Veiled yet vibrant, far-resounding
  Through the paths the woodland knows.

But with May the magic changes,
  And the music pants and pleads:
Like a violin it ranges
  All the soul's insistent needs.

All the hopes and pent desires,
  All the daring and the doubt;
Like to strong pluckt strings, the fires
  Of our spirits rushing out.

In the autumn, love seemed sober;
  Dear, 'tis now a passioned thing;
As the horn is for October,
  But the violin for spring.

V

ROAD SONG

The world is wide and the wind smells sweet,
  Wine-of-my Life is the thought of day.
The journey-lure and the footfall fleet,
  Over the hills and far away!

Joy of the open, joy of the wood:
  Sun-drenched meadow and pungent pine;
One with the vagrant brotherhood
  Under the vast sky, comrade mine!

The slanting shadows, too, are fair,
  Keen is the afternoon in zest;
Cool to the brow is the balmy air;
  At the end of the road is the Inn of Rest.

There, from the travel stains washed clean,
  Better to sit awhile than roam:
Friends foregather for talk, I ween,
  All of the wanderers trooping home.

The sun is up, and the blithe birds call;
Then, Ho for the Inn that welcomes all!

VI

RAIN OVERNIGHT

Can it be possible that overnight
  Rain roared, wind wailed, and Nature wept in woe?
Clean-washed and shriven now the heavens are bright,
  Keen scents rise from the earth; each leaf's aglow
  With sparkling life, and rivers in their flow
Give louder voicing to their old delight.

Call, if you will, this day a respite brief
  'Twixt dark and other dark to come, more drear;
I only feel, with every bird and leaf,
  How beautiful it is and blessed and dear;
  I only ask to live, and know how near
Is Love to life, how beauty neighbors grief!

VII

AS FLUTES OF ARCADY

The purity of water and the peace
  Of wind-still air: the placid scent of pines,
  Warming my heart as with the waft of wines;
The murmuring of hidden brooks, the fleece
Of foam-topped rivers, and the splendid space
Of sky above, with all its interlace
Of blue and white and gold,—O these to me
Do plead as plead the flutes of Arcady,
  Bidding my sorry stressfulness to cease.

For then I take for truth the poet's dream:
  There's naught in all the world save only good;
    Little, fair children, love no parting kills,
Romance through the tree-branches soft agleam,
  Beauty that lies await by field and wood,
    And hero-deeds along a hundred hills!

ASPECTS OF AUTUMN

I

In the wonder of their weaving lie the forests and the fields;
Rich the broodings of October, rich the magic that it wields,
With the marvel of its color like the sparkles in old wine
And the music of its breathing from the tops of ancient pine.

There are dusky purple shadows in the cool of yonder trees,
But the open plains shine yellow down the corn shocks' companies.
Oaks in bronze, and birches candid, somber hemlocks make a ring
Girdling round the green of meadows that seem strayed from some lost spring.

And the ebon crows in cohorts 'gainst a sky of drowsy blue
Make a music harsh yet strangely mergent with the landscape's hue.
Thus a splendid beast recumbent, with his skin of tawny glow,
Sun-soaked, satisfied, might stretch him where the jungle rivers flow;

Thus a rug of silken texture, mellowed by the dust
of years,
Might be laid before a princess to enchant her from
her tears.

Tranced, superb, and deep in dreaming, do you lie,
this day of days,
League on league of autumn landscape, in the vast
horizon haze;
And the umber of your furrows and the russet of
your red
Seem to garb some great earth spirit rising sheerly
from the dead

To resume the elder keeping of an age of Innocence,
When to look was joy, and breathing sent a thrill
through every sense,
When Pan's pipe still fluted golden where in dance
the wood nymph whirled,
And my Love and I went footing,—in the first
dawn of the world!

II

Ah, Autumn, now that you and I must part,
You linger, goldenly, your footstep slow,
Even as a friend, belovèd of the heart,
Seems doubly dear just ere he turn to go.

You pause by noon, deep sighing through the trees,
  And in the spangled sunset hold your breath,
That I may note your splendid symphonies
  Of color, that the night shuts in to death.

Your leaves rain down and prank the forest ways
  With tapestries of yellow, red and brown,
And through the glooming glory of your haze
  I glimpse the dreaming towers of the town.

October odors between sod and sky
  Remind me of the faith of earthly things,
As if you murmured, "Surely, by and by
  I shall come back, with birds and errant wings."

The sweet and strong communion 'twixt us two
  Is more than all the mouthings among men;
You are not beautiful alone, but true;
  I bide the season till you come again.

And O be sure of one fond heart, that waits,
  Loving and longing, midst of wintry fear,
Until, once more aglow, you ope the gates
  Of harvest, and fulfil the fruitful year.

III

When autumn, pranked in sober pageantry,
  Returns to earth and broods along the sky,
Then are the field-fires lighted, and men see
  Blue smoke uprise from brush heaps, far and nigh.

A pungent smell is in the nostrils, dim
  Athwart the sun the haze makes luminous gold;
Deep in the distance, on the horizon's rim,
  The spirals fade in wreathings manifold.

The tang and gray-blue mist and crackle fine
  Blend in to stir the secret place of tears;
I hear a message I may scarce define
  From immemorial autumns of lost years.

Upwelling from the heart come storied dreams,
  The campfires of my fathers seem to glow
In primal forests, and yon smoke-trail seems
  A painted picture of the long ago.

The feel of fall, the brooding trance, the fire
  Whose smoke crawls up to make of heaven a blur,
All seem a link between the son and sire,—
  They bring them back, the wayfarers that were

Upon the earth, like us, alert and strong,
  Feasting or fasting, underneath the sun,
But now mist-hid, evanished like a song,
  Yea, utterly forgotten, every one.

IV

How can I all-express this golden mood
  Of sky and russet field, river and hill?

Some absent God returns, and solitude
  Shines with his presence till our souls o'erfill.
Memory and hope are married, and earth's dreams
Are deep, ah, deeper than the deepest streams!

HEROES

"Mother, I read of heroes, kings,
Of folk with trappings, folk with wings;
Where live they, will they ever come
To see me in my little home?
Are there such beings, fair and wise,
And have they feet and hands and eyes?"

"My child, you saw but yesterday
A hero: when he came this way,
You gave him scarce a single glance;
He wore no crown, he bore no lance,
He seemed but made of common clay.

"And just an hour ago, there stood
Before you—O so great and good!
One who will sit with God for aye,
When the brief years are rolled away."

"But, mother, in the books I read
They walk like kings, they do indeed;
How *could* they come and go, and I
Not know that they were passing by?"

"The tales are true, my dear, there be
Kings, heroes, saints, in history;

Romance and legend fitly tell
Of what they did, and what their spell;
Their deeds are bright like burnished gold,
In chronicles and records old."

"How could I miss their being here?"

"They did not seem like saints, my dear,
Nor heroes, when they drew so near."

THE CHILDREN'S BOATS

O LITTLE loop of water, with the green
Of girdling grasses round your lustered sheen,
Where are the boats the children used to ride
Upon the bosom of your dimpled tide?
Those boats they loved, and launched with large-
eyed zest
On Orient faring or for Polar quest?

Where are the boats,—and where the children, too?
Have they, as such explorers often do,
Sunk with their ships? Or do they haply find
The new is like the old they left behind:
Their deep-sea conquests and their valiant claims
To far-found earth are naught but childish games?

I know not, but I know they are not here,
These young adventurers of yester year.

Is it because November, keen with frost,
Is come, or are the tiny strayers lost?
I listen, and I wait; perhaps the spring
Will lure them back, and with the first bird's wing
Up in the blue, again shall spread the sails
That took the sunlight, or that dared the gales:
Perhaps,—when comes the May: or must it be,
In that far spring men call Eternity?

DON QUIXOTE

SMILES for him, yes, and tears—but most of all
  Envy, for that he set his soul to win
Virtue and love and valor, and their call
  Upbore him ever above sleight and sin.

His Dulcinea was of common earth?
  And Sancho Panza scarce a trusty squire?
Not so: mistimed our pity and our mirth;
  They live forever, in his soul's desire.

Shiningly sure the Spanish Don was right,
  Who saw the world through eyes with faith
    agleam;
This melancholy, madcap, errant knight,
Who wrought so beautifully—in his dream!

THE SECRET PLACE

When I shake off the outer things
  That, thronging, drag me fifty ways—
The busy needs, the little stings
  That hum about my usual days—
I come into a secret place
And meet my true self, face to face.

Quiet removal from the press,
  A breathing-room wherein the soul
Knows love and love's own tenderness,
  And in a dream descries the goal;
There wholesome thoughts and sweet confer,
Like garments laid in lavender.

Anew I feel that I belong—
  Alien and outcast though I be—
To the great Spirit whose far song
  Makes an ineffable harmony;
And, with a rhythm in my feet,
I fare me forth my fate to greet.

VIGIL

Why should it irk me, the night,
  After the day that is done?
Stars, making distant delight,
  Dew-pools, instead of the sun?

Soft, cool winds, and the scent
  Of gardens, silent and sweet;
Why should I lack of content,
  Joys like to these at my feet?

Ah, but the hours are long
  Ere I may haste from afar,
Seeking your face like a song,
  Seeking your soul like a star!

Winds, waters, skies, be my friend,
  Grant me swift sleep, and to wake
Swiftly, my waiting at end,—
  Dearest, be mine with daybreak!

SONG

(*On the Death of a Young Poet*)

SAD little heart, overburdened with dream,
Must you cease so soon?
Give over the tune,
And the dream?

Valiant you were, for a day brief and bright;
Now, comes your rest,
Tranquil and blest,
In the night.

They who keep faith, have not kept it in vain.
Courage, fond heart,
Glad was your part,
Sweet your strain.

Therefore, sing on, every note of you heard;
Winter or May,
Sounds night and day
Your clear word.

Blithe, buried singer, sing on, for our sake!
Gone is the pain,
Never again
The heart-break!

CONQUERING EAGLES

I READ the classic book—and raised mine eye
To where, with sun-tipped spears, went storming by
A great, armed host. The splendid roads were thronged
With all the trappings that to war belonged.

Next, I beheld how figures stately, slow,
With filleted calm brows drew past; and lo,
A temple white, within whose pillared porch
I saw the sacred fires leap like a torch.

Then, close beside the waves that seemed to say
With silver itinerance, *All shall pass away,*
Loomed large a Senate house where flocked and fought
The men who for the great Republic wrought.

While sharp against the saffron-colored sea
(How it comes back to musing memory!)
Swayed to and fro the swollen tides of folk,
The hewers and the builders at their work.

High from a hill, swept sounds of song that fell
Upon the city like a miracle;
The feet of heroes, like as rhyme to rhyme,
Fell into harmony and kept march time.

. . . . . .

All this I saw. Still rule the spirit these
Enshrinéd shapes from out the centuries;
Still cry along a sky that seems their home
The conquering eagles of imperial Rome!

THE MESSAGE

I WALKED a lane where overarching trees
With shade and shine made woodland witcheries;
Earth odors mingled with the breath of flowers,
And shift of shadows told the passing hours.

And sudden, in that place so hushed and hid,
The silence that companioned me was thrid
By a thrush note that spoke, not to my ear,
But to my soul from out some vanished year.

There seemed to issue from that swelling breast
Some secret brooded on as dear and best
Through long, sweet sessions; all the doubt and
dread
Resolved themselves into calm faith instead.

There was nor pain nor parting but would turn
Unto the better thing toward which we yearn;
"Trust on, trust on," the singer seemed to say,
"The Good shall come, though it be far away."

Because I might not see the singer there,
His voice came all the clearer through the air;
Had he been close, and plain before my gaze,
I might have missed him in the woodland ways.

All the day through, it haunted me and clung,
The message that the tree-hid thrush had sung;
And in my dreams that night I heard again
The note divine, the wood-begotten strain.

GUILTY

I LOATHE this room, for it seems to blab
  A hideous secret I would hide;
With its sly, straight chairs, its wall-paper drab,
  Its corners cool and its hearthstone wide.

Invisible hands reach forth, as fain
  To clutch at Something; and here and there
Lurk shadowy heads; and moans of pain,
  Dulled down by dust, invest the air.

Dark innuendoes and ugly hints,
  Too delicate to be more than guessed,
Move o'er the floor; in the very tints
  Of the curtains evil is dim-expressed.

Whene'er I enter, I feel the jeers;
  The mirrors mow at me, face to face;
Noon and night, 'tis a nest for fears,
  A sneaking, pitiless, hellish place.

Open the windows, throw back the door,
  Let wind-sweet sunlight flood in and shine!
But O for my soul as it was before,—
  The spirit that dwells here is mine, is mine!

HAGAR

SAID Hagar: "Nay, I cannot see him die,
  My little lad, my dear, my only one."
For bread and water failed her, sheer on high
  Shone, hot and horrible, the desert sun.

That tiny cry wailed ever in her ears:
  She lifted up her voice and wept; she said:
"His father loved us not." The happy years
  In Egypt ran like music in her head.

Ishmael, the archer, shaggy, strong and wild,
  For a great end was saved that bitter day.
He who was but a perishing, wee child,
  Through mother-love was snatched from death
    away.

And Hagar was full happy; who can know
  The feel of bliss like one who once was sad?
Hagar was happy, as she watched upgrow
  To might and masterhood her tender lad.

And in old age—great time of memories—
  How oft she must have sat beside some well
Of water, set about with slender trees,
  And mused on Abraham and Ishmael!

HUMAN

WEIGHED down by grief, o'erborne by deep despair,
  She lifted up white arms to heaven and prayed
That day for death; she made a mighty prayer
  Beside her dear one gently to be laid.

And standing thus, it flashed across her mind
  How she must make a seemly silhouette
Against the sky, her figure sharply lined
  Upon the westering sunlight, black as jet.

WITHDRAWALS

Look on his face, so aged, so set, so white:
  What evil one has cast his horoscope?
What is the lack that makes him old tonight?
  Hope.

Why sits he statue-like, from head to feet?
  His body holds no pulse of blood, meseems;
What was the voice once sang to him so sweet?
  Dreams.

But, surely, still some star must gleam for him;
  Some glittering friendship of the sky above?
What has he lost that trances life and limb?
  Love.

Hope, dreams and love, 'tis these he fed upon,
  They were his baubles and his very breath.
What now is left to him, so wondrous wan?
  Death.

YOUNGSTER AND OLDSTER

I

"Is she not fair?
Behold, how her hair
Haloes her head, and those spirit-blue eyes,
See, how they lift to the stars, to the skies!

None can compare
With her, my lady, the soul in her face
Set like a lamp to illumine the place."

II

"She walks well, and her gown is deftly worn;
Tonight, she's almost beautiful; the morn
Is like to show more plain the path of years;
But now, yes, truly, all my doubts and fears
Are laid to sleep, and for an hour or two,
Ah, foolish me, I dream as others do!"

Tell me, Sir Critic, you to error loath,
Is one right, or the other—or are both?

BETTER SO

Helen and Helóise and Joan of France,
  Ruth and Griselda, Mary with her tears,
Beautiful stricken women of Romance,
  What are they all but dreams from out the years?

I cannot hold them, hear them, kiss their feet;
  But now beside me, close, and O so fair,
You come, and I enfold you, find you sweet,
  Dazed with the splendor of your eyes and hair!

GARDEN CLOSES

EARTH buffets and harasses
  Her children, day by day;
    Pricked on by harsh endeavor,
  Debarred of prayer and play,
    Chasing a Shade forever,
Man fares by perilous passes,
  Till he be bent and gray.

But Life,—how deep the kindness
  That saves us from despair!
    Hath eke her garden closes
  Where all is calm and fair;
    Some place of rest and roses
Where man puts off his blindness
  Of canker and of care.

There music sounds, clear-hearted,
  And star-eyed women smile,
    There friends, estranged in seeming,
  Forget their former guile;
    Above, to help the dreaming,
The clouds are soft disparted
  By warm, sweet moons the while.

Into this sacred haven
  Of health and happy lure,
    Come marred and haunted faces
  To taste a pleasure pure;
    In this most dear of places
What word or wish is craven
  These walls may not immure.

So, frayed upon sharp edges
  Of knives that cut full deep,
    Our own lost souls pursuing,
  We may thereafter creep
    Away from sordid doing,
Behind these holy hedges
  For solace and for sleep.

THE OLD COUPLE

A PAIR of oldsters, humble folk, come straying
  Along the street; their hands are linked, they smile
Like comrades who are fain to go a-maying,
  Their cares forgot the while.

A little basket bears their food, their faces
  Are rosy-wrinkled and their eyes so bright
You'd say that they were bound for fairy places
  Of far-away delight.

But nay; in sooth, their fond intent is only
  To rest an hour or so the fields among,
Where flowers blow free and clouds sail high and lonely
  And lays of birds are sung.

For they are country-bred and so the city
  Saddens their hearts, week-long immured for toil;
They know the ugliness, the want of pity,
  Where myriad workers moil.

Quaint is their garb; his coat is out of fashion,
  Her bonnet never won an envious glance;
But watch his care, his almost lyric passion
  Her comfort to enhance,

And see how she repays it, dumb or speaking,
  By every look and tone and turn of head. . . .
Onward they go, the open country seeking,
  There to be comforted.

'Tis not when we are young, in time of roses—
  Roses and bird-songs and the bloom of youth—
Love shines most beautiful and full discloses
  The wonders of his worth.

Old and uncouth? Not so; by every gesture
  They stand confessed: the faith in them is seen.
The twain have donned Love's bright immortal vesture:
  Behold them—king and queen!

THE CHILD AND THE ROSE

Said the child to the rose: "I would that I
  Might rest in a pretty garden close,
To feel the wind as it brushes by,
  To play with every flower that grows;
It must be sweet in the summertide
To watch the buds as they open wide,"
      Said the child to the rose.

Said the rose to the child: "And I would be,
  Like you, a creature sweet and mild,
Safe-housed from weathers winterly
  And warmed with love all undefiled;
'Tis cold for sleep when the night is near,
And the time till morning goes full drear,"
      Said the rose to the child.

They had their will: for the rose one day
Was plucked and worn in a ballroom gay,
Where the air was stifling hot,—and so
It shrunk and died in the fierce, brief glow.

The child, a woman pinched and white,
In after years, on a winter's night,
Lay in the garden, took her rest,
Dead, with a baby at her breast.

THE DERELICT

(The derelict schooner *Reindeer* has been sighted off Cape Henlopen. She has one hundred cases of dynamite aboard.—*Daily Newspaper.*)

O, A derelict on the open sea,
  A ship whose crew is fled,
Is a somber thing for memory,
  A body whose soul is dead!

She floats at will of every wind,
  She drifts as currents set;
And all her joy is far behind,
  And all her hope, regret.

Her spars loom up against the sky,
  Her hulk is black and low;
And sullenly she passes by
  The craft that homeward go.

Her secret grim would blanch the bold,
  Unsinew e'en the brave;
For dynamite is in her hold
  And she above the wave.

From Saragossa waters far
  Into the Gulf Stream bland,
This barque has wandered, by no star
  Sure piloted to land.

The horrid freight her bosom hides
  Has given charmèd life
Unto her course, and safe she rides
  Above the billows' strife.

All sail-sped things will give her berth;
  E'en birds that beat the air
Will cease their clamorous, aery mirth,
  Feeling her presence there;

And monsters underneath the blue
  Sheer off, what time her nose
Their watery regions pushes through
  And down their sea-walks goes.

How terrible the thought of night
  To every human soul
That meets the ship and knows her plight,
  Her cargo and her goal.

For when the darkness leaves a maze
  Of bourneless brine alone,
And sailors guess their devious ways
  Across the vast unknown,

Ah, God, to run her down, to shock
  Against her fateful deck:
A hell of noise, a shuddering rock
  Of sea and sky and wreck,

Then yawningly her self-made doom
  Would gulf her down at last;
A water-worn and dim-lit tomb
  Redeem her fearsome past.

But woe betide her rescuer!
  For pitilessly she
Will rend and drag him down with her
  Into the under sea!

FACE TO FACE

LONG weeks I walked the city's crowded ways,
  And vainly sought to find you, morn and night;
By daybreak, when the lamps were all ablaze,
  And when the noon was bright.

But when I turned, and with the will to flee
  Unto some dim and all-deserted place,
Have hurried here where only God may see,—
  I meet you, face to face!

THE CAMBERWELL GARDEN

(Browning was born May 7, at Camberwell, a suburb of London.)

MAY hath her own blithe beauty, nor doth need
The other loveliness of human deed
And human fellowship; yet doubly fair
She seems to brood o'er Camberwell, since there
Once walked the lad who made of blooms and birds
His cronies, knew their winsome ways and words.

Far did he wander; many a mile away,
And many a year, he saw the face of May,
Rosy, recurrent, in Italian nooks
Uplifting summer arms and Siren looks.
This month of melody and warmth and shine
Is welcome to the heart of man as wine.

Ah, but at Camberwell each sound and sight
And scent—sure ministers to his delight—
Were interwove with dewy memories
Stronger and sweeter than from overseas;
And wheresoe'er his feet in faring turned,
Whiles, for that garden-place he must have yearned.

He who comes back to greet an old, dear friend,
And finds him gone, knows it is not the end,

But lovingly awaits the gladder day
When all friends gather in from faraway.
So maiden May comes back and waits for him
In grass and flower and every greening limb.

. . . . . .

Long gone the garden, and the singer too
Sleeps otherwhere; but still the sky is blue,
Spring scents are rife, old magic still beguiles,
And May in Camberwell recalls, and smiles.

GARDEN LORE

THERE'S a flowery shrub the May brings
(Never mind the name),
'Tis enough to know its color sings
Like a living flame;

And my heart sings, looking at it there
In my garden small;
Of the growths so many and so fair,
Fairest of them all.

For, what time I stood and asked the bloom:
"Shall I ever be
Happier than in this scented room
I am now with thee?"

Then, uplifting graciously the head
(How the garden hums!)
Soft but clear the flowery creature said:
"When your lady comes!"

THE SECOND BAPTISM

WHEN tiny babes we touch on brow and breast,
  Making them God's the while,
We murmur: "Take and keep, Thy keep is best,"
  And tearfully we smile.

And when, lapsed back to childhood's witless ways,
  All helpless in our hands,
Poor souls, they walk as in a dim-lit haze—
  What myriads in what lands!—

Then, with awed lips, we look to the divine,
  Striving to still our fears,
And say: "They seem not ours, they *must* be
      Thine,"—
  Wetting them with our tears.

THE SPIRIT SHALL NOT DIE

"Yet some men say that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of Lord Jesu into another place; and men say he shall come again and he shall win the Holy Cross."
—Sir Thomas Malory.

Arthur, the peerless king, went out upon
  The tide and left Sir Bedivere alone;
Who, reft of his liege lord, the well-loved one,
  Stood wailing by the marge and made his moan.
With Arthur all was well, but with his realm
Ill—now the lawless days drew nigh to whelm.

And many said that he would come again:
  Haply they meant return in youthful might,
Girt up and ready to wipe out the stain
  Of erring years, and trumpet in the right
Which, he a-gone, had faded from the land,
So that it drooped beneath the heathen hand.

It is not thus he shall come back; yet truth
  They spake who so declared; for all the deeds
He did were deeds of gentleness and ruth
  And virtue, and whoever sows such seeds
Shall bring forth fruit again in spirit, him
Time cannot quell, nor death itself bedim.

Yea, Arthur shall return and still return,
  Till all the earth's good souls are blent as one,
Till steadily in hearts of men shall burn
  Love that shall leap like fire from sun to sun;
Return from Avalon, and evermore
Kindle the faith of those beside the shore.

AN IMPRESSION

The arching skies, the ancient wind
  Soughing through immemorial trees;
The sense of all that lurks behind
  The year's now tattered masonries,
Where the blithe birds once built their home
High in the air-sweet, leafy dome.

Then, the lone figure of a girl
  Clear-limned against the buttressed hills;
Slim, beautiful, a tiny pearl
  Set round with ruby light that fills
The all-illumined spaces where
No dark may creep nor shadow dare.

Not for an earldom would I break
  The silence of yon dreaming maid;
I could not play her soul awake
  With Love's most magic serenade;
Her thought holds secrets hid from me,
Deeper than mortal minstrelsy.

LOVE AND TIME

THE longest night of the year, they say;
  By four of the clock, the dark comes down,
And the hills loom dim and far away,
  While the lights wink out in the big, vague town.

And yet, O Love, of the nights I know,
  This night was briefest,—so brief, so blest.
For you came and gave me your heart, and so
  Time was nothing and darkness best!

ROMANCE

You say Romance is dead, you conjure up
  Fond images of some idyllic time
When elves were building in each buttercup
  And goblins set the church-bells all a-chime.

When men rode out to battle for the right
  In armorings that like the sun's self shone,
And rescued ladies from some hapless plight
  Of durance grim, or love that plained alone.

When gods disported them as mortal folk,
  When all the rivers and each tiny stream
Must have a tutelary nymph, each oak
  Its hamadryad, and each night its dream.

. . . . . .

Step to the window, look upon the street:
  See yonder woman flaunt her jewels rich,
A milkmaid once; and see that girl so sweet
  Yet pitiful; and nuzzling in the ditch

A man who oft has swayed a multitude;
  Mark how yon cripple cries his tawdry wares
And think of him blithe-limbed in boyhood's mood;
  Look how the harlots lure souls to their lairs.

Watch yonder thief sneak by, and close beside,
  A pure-eyed nun who plans some holy deed;
Think how each story blends to swell the tide
  Of human histories and hearts that bleed.

Then speak no more of olden, golden days,
  Of mythic creature and of magic rill;
Be the true artist, walk these modern ways;
  Here are your tools: go, fashion at your will!

THE DEAR ADVENTURER

(*In Memoriam: John S. Bradstreet*)

O DEAR adventurer, once more dost thou
  Fare forth into the outlands, o'er far seas!
Nothing can come of strange unto thee now,
  For travel was thy wont, thy argosies
Were rich and many; where thy bark was turned
Friends met thee, and for thee a home-light burned.

Surely, some day, as often in the Past,
  Keen-eyed and brown, sweet smiling as of yore,
Thou wilt come back to live with us at last,
  Thy shadow ever grateful at our door:
Bringing, the while we marvel at thy wares,
An aromatic breath from Otherwheres.

Or if it be that we instead must go
  To find thee, friend, all gentle and all true,
Eager and waving wilt thou stand, we know,
  To bid us welcome when the voyage is through;
O what a meeting will be there, what flowers,
What talk, what treasures shown, what shining
    hours!

IDOLS

They made them idols in the elder days,
  Idols and images of brass and stone,
To bow before their semblance, when the praise
  Should go, O God, to Thee and Thee alone.

Yet who shall say how much of tender trust,
  Of deep-heart adoration and desire
Was hid behind these symbols of the dust
  That rose like smoke to dim the central fire?

How often, in those heathen hearts, indeed,
  Ardent and upwardly there must have burned
A flame of worship, an imperious need
  To clasp and kiss the thing toward which they
    yearned.

Midst of the mystic Orient today,
  Far in the north, or where the great South Seas
Circle the islands, gather still to pray
  The myriad folk whose faith is like to these.

Rebuke them not: even as a root at birth
  Feels upward to the light, these simple men
Foredream the flower and darkly from the earth
  Salute the mystery beyond their ken.

GLIMPSES OF ITALY

I

IN AN ITALIAN HILL TOWN

I MISSED the uses of my mother tongue;
  Afire with Beauty, yet I scarce could speak
A few, poor stammering words, hard-wrung
  From lips inapt. So, through a silent week
Of dreamful isolation wandered I,
The dumbest thing between the sod and sky.

But heaven sent me token, after while:
  A wee bambino waved a chubby hand
    At me, the stranger, in the open street;
    Smiling, it waved; I found it very sweet,
  This wordless converse; both could understand
The universal language of a smile!

II

THE CLOISTER GARDEN AT CERTOSA

It is a place monastic, set above
  The city's pride and pleasuring below;
The benediction of the sky breathes love
  Over the olive trees and vines a-row.

The old gray walls are dedicate to prayer
  And silence; in the corridors dim-lit
Lurks many a painting, many a fresco rare
  Done by some brother for the joy of it.

Pale lavender and red pomegranate trees,
  Roses and poppies spilling garden sweets;
And tall lush grass and grain, and, circling these,
  The cool of cloistral walks and shadowed seats.

By a sun-dial in the center, rests
  One brown-robed Father; and his lips recite
Some holy word; little he heeds the jests
  Of those who make the world their chief delight.

While Florence, far below, from dreamy towers
Throws back the sun and tolls the tranquil hours.

III

OLD STORY-TELLING

(At the Villa Palmieri, situated on a hill outside Florence, according to the old tradition, gathered the lords and ladies of a summer evening to hear the stories set down by Boccaccio in the Decameron,—while below the plague raged in the city.)

Heedless gay folk, lying at ease amid
  The fruits and flowers, far above the town
Whose evil case from them was duly hid
  By olive gardens stretching down and down;

There, in the scented evenings long ago,
They laughed and listened in the afterglow,
To tales eternized by Boccaccio.

IV

FRA ANGELICO

They called him angel brother, for his smile
Was amiable like angels, and he loved
To paint them ever on the convent walls;
Yea, in his very cell he made them sing
And praise and weep Lord Jesus and the Maid,
While all his fellow monks looked raptly on.
No wage he took for work, and ne'er began
To paint an angel till he breathed a prayer;
And by that prayer and from that dreaming hand
Came pictures tremulous with worshiping,
Till all beholding them are fain to say:
"Angelico, the artist, loved what things
Are high and holy, and his tender soul
Shines through his colors and his saintly forms,
And shows to men a half-forgotten heaven."

The flower-like name of Florence sounds twice fair
Because he worked within her walls of fame;
And on the heights of lovely Fiesole
Floats like a Presence his so pure renown

V

LIKE PÆSTUM'S TEMPLE

Moments there are that loom up from the past
  Tarnished yet beautiful; we deemed them dead,
  Their old-time witchery forever fled;
Not so; for of a sudden, all unasked,
Lo, they return to rule our souls at last;
  So fresh, so fair, they almost seem to shed
  A lovelier light than in the years long sped,
Weaving a wonder that is unsurpassed:

Proud vistaed arches, gleams of broken stone,
  Columns superb, blithe statues buried deep
  Until exhumed from immemorial sleep
To be belovèd as our household own:
  Like Pæstum's temple, tranced beside the sea,
  Radiant with dreams and ancient extasy.

APERÇUS

I

CHANGED

A MOMENT gone, and you were flesh and blood,
  An obvious beauty, any day may see;
But as death's night enwraps you, and the flood
  Of life recedes, you seem to glide from me
And of a sudden to be mystical
  As pampas grass around a midnight pool;
  Delicate, still, and hidden in the cool.
Love, is it death, or but a moon-kisst spell?

II

PETITION

The big world balks and puzzles me,
  I know not what I truly am;
Lord, grant me grave humility,
Sturdy with courage would I be,
  Yet docile as an upland lamb.

III

MULIER MUTABILE

Three bitter things of womankind I see:
A young girl who has given utterly,
And wakes to know her hero common clay.

A mother bending on a morn of May
Over her little dead;

A creature lewd,
Wearing the semblance of a merry mood,
The lures of sight and sense her only treasures,
Grown old, and shrunk, and forced to leave her
pleasures.

IV

ETIQUETTE

I called on my soul one spring-like day,
And left my card, for I found him out;
My soul, polite, came up my way
And called, but I was not about.
So we missed each other, and never grew
To be good friends, as some folk do.

MUSIC MYSTERY

TELL me, O Music, why the bliss you bring
Comes edged with pain from every shaken string?
"We are but wraiths," the woodwinds wailed reply,
"Born to be beautiful—but born to die."

HIGH AND LOW

Upon the heights they rested; looking down,
"What shuddering depths," she said, "thank God, afar!"
But he: "'Twas thence we climbed to reach the crown;
O Love, I bless what brought us where we are."

VITA BREVIS EST

THE gray thing, life, and the bright thing, love,
The earth beneath and the heaven above;
Swift chance, swift change, be it worst or best,
Then the woven boughs, and the long, cool rest.

WORDS OF PARTING

THE words of parting in our English tongue
  Are heavy-fraught with tenderness and tears:
We speak them first when life and love are young,
  And then repeat them all the after years:
Good-by, Farewell, over and o'er again,
Old words of parting and of hidden pain!

Good-by, we call, and wave uncertain hands,
  Farewell, and wonder shall we find some day
The friend who goes far forth to other lands,
  The more-than-friend, whose steps must turn away.
O, the sweet kindnesses our tongues would tell,
Yet we can only say, *Good-by, Farewell.*

Sometimes the words seem light, and lips that smile
  Do utter them, where jest and song are free;
Yet these same jesters, in a little while,
  May speak their burden slow and solemnly:
Farewell, Good-by, the revel now is done,
We weep alone before the morrow's sun.

We build us homes, we strive for happiness,
  So eager is our clinging and so sweet!

We lift strong barriers against distress,
  But our Forevers are so frail, so fleet.
Good-by, Farewell, we say it, soon or late;
They are the syllables that spell our Fate.

The words of parting in our English speech
  Are magical with meanings left unsaid;
Earth-warm they are, yet have a heavenly reach,
  They sound above the living and the dead:
You hear our heart-beats in a brief *Good-by;*
Farewell,—our very souls are in that cry!